

REPORT ON INFORMATION COLLECTED CONCERNING APPLICANT

Under section 60835 of title 2 of the California Code of Regulations, the Bureau of State Audits (Bureau) is responsible for collecting information concerning applicants for the Citizens Redistricting Commission that is needed by the Applicant Review Panel to perform its responsibilities. This is a report by Bureau staff in compliance with that responsibility.

Name of Applicant: Melissa R. Michelson, # 7266

Information: In her application, Applicant indicated that she had been involved in the Voices of Reform Project in 2004, which was sponsored by the Commonwealth Club of California. Bureau staff asked the Applicant about her involvement in this project. Applicant indicated that she “cooperated with state leaders from across the political spectrum to come to consensus on how to reform California’s political system.” According to its website, “Voices of Reform seeks to foster probing discussions of key governance reform issues, make these discussions available to a broad range of people throughout the state, and encourage opinion leaders in this state to actively pursue promising reforms. The goal was to contribute to a social and political environment that can produce structural changes to state government to make it more responsive, effective, and fiscally sound. Issues it [Voices of Reform] addresses include: redistricting; term limits; campaign financing; the state budget process; the initiative process; voter access and participation; and civic engagement.” The website also states that Voices of Reform is made possible by grants from the James Irvine Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation.

As indicated in the “Activities” section of the supplemental application, Applicant was the lead evaluator on the James Irvine Foundation’s California Votes Initiative. According to its website, the Foundation launched the California Votes Initiative in January 2006 to increase voter participation — particularly among low-income and ethnic communities. The Foundation’s website shows that the Applicant was the lead evaluator on a three-member evaluation team that reviewed and analyzed the results of the outreach efforts by participating organizations. These organizations were: Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC); California Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG); Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAECJ); Central American Resource Center (CARECEN); National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO); Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA); Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO); Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP); Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE).

Bureau research found the Applicant’s name on a list of founders of an organization called Labor Justice. According to its website, Labor Justice is an advocacy group “dedicated to securing labor rights for farmworkers and domestic workers.” The organization is registered as a lobbyist employer with the California Secretary of State, but Applicant was not a registered lobbyist. Staff asked the Applicant about her involvement with Labor Justice. The Applicant responded

that she supported Labor Justice by joining the group. She indicated that she did not provide any financial contributions and did not participate in any way. In response to staff's question about whether the Applicant is still a member, she stated she has not asked to be removed and does not recall when she joined.

Bureau research also discovered that the Applicant has written and been quoted extensively in the press on topics such as California gubernatorial elections and candidates, as well as presidential candidates and elections.

The Applicant is the current President of the American Political Science Association's (APSA) Latino Caucus. The APSA's website states that it is the leading professional organization for the study of political science and serves more than 15,000 members in over 80 countries. Per its website, the Latino Caucus' stated mission is to "both promote and protect the professional development and well-being of Latinas/os in political science and those interested in the study of Latino politics." The website goes on to say that the "four elected officers are responsible for informing and involving the general membership regarding all matters related to the mission of the Caucus."

Bureau research disclosed that the Applicant has received several grants and contracts to study and conduct surveys/research on Latino voter mobilization. These grants include:

- \$2,500 in 2003 from the Kenneth L. Maddy Institute of Public Affairs to study "Immigrant Political Attitudes in the Central Valley"
- \$41,628 in 2002 from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) to conduct an experimental door-to-door get-out-the-vote drive aimed at increasing Latino youth participation in the November 5, 2002 elections in Fresno
- \$5,000 in 2002 by the CSU Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity Award regarding "Mobilizing the Latino Vote: The Effect of Personal Canvassing Efforts"
- \$20,000 sub-contract from the Pew Charitable Trusts to conduct an experimental door-to-door get-out-the-vote drive that focused on the Dos Palos-Oro Loma School Board election of November 6, 2001
- \$5,000 in 2000 from the CSU Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity Award to study the political attitudes and behavior of Fresno Latinos
- \$4,442 in 2000 from the Affirmative Action Faculty Development Award to study the political attitudes and behavior of Fresno Latinos
- \$1,998 in 1999 from CSU Fresno for "Latino Voting Behavior in California's 20th District Partisanship vs. Ethnicity
- \$6,000 in 1998 from a Great Cities grant to survey research on the politicization and voting behavior of Chicago Latinos
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Bureau staff contacted Lisa Garcia Bedolla, the author of one of the Applicant's letters of recommendation, to confirm the information provided in the letter and receive any additional

information that may be relevant. Ms. Bedolla confirmed the information in the letter and added that she was Applicant's colleague on the evaluation panel of the Irvine Foundation's California Votes Initiative project. She stated that it was a strictly non-political project. Staff asked Ms. Bodella about her comment that the California Votes Initiative "...required Professor Michelson to coordinate with a variety of organizations, organizations that represented a range of ideological approaches to community work." Ms. Bodella responded that the organizations were the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, California Public Interest Research Group, Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, Central American Resource Center, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Pacific Institute for Community Organization, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, and Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education. She further clarified that they had different strategies, not necessarily ideologies.

Recommendation: None

Name and title of person submitting response: Sharon Reilly, Chief Counsel

Report Date: September 20, 2010